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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR IO/UNP, DRL, EUR/ERA AND EUR/AGS

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SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN RESPONSE TO UNHCR 61 DEMARCHE

REF: A) SECSTATE 42847 B) SECSTATE 41971

This message is sensitive but unclassified.

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: EconPolOff delivered ref a demarche on March 11 to Engelbert Theuermann, head of the Austrian MFA's Human Rights Bureau (with responsibility for the CHR). Theuermann reported that he had attended an EU Human Rights working group meeting the previous day which had discussed common positions and strategies. He expected the EU Foreign Ministers (GAERC) formally to adopt an agenda of human rights priorities for the CHR at its session on March 16. Theuermann provided the following overview of current Austrian and EU strategies:

2. (SBU) CUBA: Theuermann said that the EU was waiting for the exact text of the resolution and details regarding sponsorship. He indicated that Austria had taken no final decision yet, but thought it likely that Austria would follow its historical pattern of not co-sponsoring, but then voting in favor of a Cuba resolution.

3. (SBU) BELARUS: Theuermann said that the EU's decision to co-table the Belarus resolution (ref b) was part of an effort to maximize the effectiveness of its Neighborhood Policy by encouraging development of democratic institutions and practices in Belarus.

4. (SBU) ISRAEL AND THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT: Theuermann said that the EU shared U.S. views on the potential for progress in the region. He concurred that the CHR must therefore carefully consider the timing of any proposed Middle East resolutions.

5. (SBU) DPRK: Theuermann told us the EU has a strong interest in DPRK developments and had decided to sponsor a resolution. The EU sees Japan as playing a key role and hopes Japan will co-sponsor and actively lobby for the resolution.

6. (SBU) SUDAN - Theuermann said the EU wanted to highlight the Sudan situation within CHR. EU member states would engage actively on a Sudan resolution.

7. (SBU) ZIMBABWE: Theuermann said that there had been a lively discussion among EU human rights representatives regarding the approach to take on country resolutions that historically had been unsuccessful (such as those on Chechnya and Zimbabwe). The EU had decided that it was "not useful" again to propose a resolution on Zimbabwe. This would only antagonize the African Group, whose support for a Sudan resolution was critical. The EU also thought another attempt might be counterproductive, since Mugabe would use this as raw material for anti-Western and anti-CHR propaganda.

8. (SBU) CHECHNYA: Theuermann said the EU had taken no final decision yet on Chechnya. The EU still hoped to receive clear commitments from Russia in the context of the EU-Russia human rights dialogue.

9. (SBU) AUSTRIAN PRIORITIES: Austria will work to maintain all references to anti-Semitism contained in the 2003 CHR resolution on religious intolerance. The GoA also supports EU sponsorship of a resolution on Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and the rights and responsibilities of indigenous minorities.
Brown